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1847







SKETCHES BY REV. R. HOYT.—NO. 1.
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1857

JULIA,

AN AUTUMNAL TALE.

WHERE rural Chester spreads in hill and plain,
And rippling Bronx pursues its peaceful way,
Just as you turn within a winding lane
Skirting the border of a little bay
There stands a cottage ivied-o'er and gray.

The home of JULIA's joyous spring of life ;
Ere the sweet blossom ripened into love,
Ere she had known the autumn of its strife,
The cold rude blasts that pierce the gentle Dove,
And warn its wing to calmer climes above.

Alas, there came a change upon her heart,
A hopeless sorrow like an April blight :
For other lands she saw her swain depart ;
And swift departed then each gay delight,
Spring became Winter,—Morning turned to night !

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JULIA.

Still climbed the wood-bine by the cottage door,
Still sang the robin sweetly to his mate,
Still strove parental fondness as before,
But JULIA'S grief still knew but one dark date,
And flower and song and love came all too late.

It was OCTOBER,—sadly wailed the breeze,
As o'er the hill and through the wood it sped ;
The fruit was gathered from the sapless trees,
A frosty veil the meadows overspread,
And all the groves were withering or dead.

The harvest fields of all their treasures shorn
Betrayed again the rude unseemly ground ;
Where grew the bending wheat, the towering corn,
But stubble now, and leafless stalks were found,
Furrow, and ridge, the fading landscape round.

Fair CHESTER seemed like some desponding maid,
The scene so sad beneath the autumn sky ;
Her summer sun to rival climates strayed,
Her dewy pearls ungathered left to lie,
And limpid Bronx in grief to murmur by.

JULIA.

(Ah, gentle stream, glide on in ceaseless wo,
While by thy margin sleeps thy plaintive bard,
Sweet minstrel Drake ! Ye autumn winds sing low !
Ye seasons all, leave that green slope unmarred
Where yon lone willows his dear ashes guard.)

There came a stranger to the gate one eve,
And craved in gentle words to be a guest ;
Might that sweet cot his weariness relieve,
Now day so far was drooping down the West ;
A pilgrim's blessing on the roof should rest.

All welcome ever to that kindly hearth :
None sought its plenty or its peace in vain ;—
Though pensive JULIA knew no more of mirth,
Yet none abiding there might know her pain,
Did in her heart such holy calmness reign.

Came hastening on the chill autumnal night,
With rustic pastime and its guiltless glee,
The floor was stainless, and the fire was bright,
The nuts were cracking upon every knee,
And new-made cider flowed most sweet and free.

JULIA.

High rose the mirth as from the embers flew
The roasting chestnut with a sudden start,
For blushing John, or Jane, an omen true
Of love's sly passion glowing in the heart,
And Hymen's speedy aid with his sweet art.

The stranger's heart was moved by JULIA's grace,
And oft he gazed, as bound by beauty's spell,
Upon her faultless form and winning face,
And as he felt the pure emotion swell
He longed the secret of his love to tell.

Nor he unworthy such a maid to win ;
Of noble aspect, manly, yet serene ;
No foul deceiver, stained with reckless sin ;—
In sportive group upon the village green,
He were a goodly king, and she a queen.

With gentle accents soon, and whispering low,
Besought he JULIA for a hopeful smile ;
But ah, his suit still added to her wo—
Her mournful thoughts were far away the while,
And loving words might not her heart beguile.

JULIA.

Ah ! stranger said she sweetly, one I knew
Who wooed and won this simple heart of mine,
And to his image still it must be true,
Though weary seasons it may yet repine,
Till life's last sun of hope in death decline.

'Twas autumn e'en as now when last we met,
And seven long years their dreary course have run,
Since here we plighted, never to forget ;
The holy pledge I may recall for none ;
One shares my silent love,—and only one.

I still remember how we used to rove
Young and light-hearted in the frosty Fall,
Far in the lonely depths of nut-wood grove,
List'ning the squirrel's chirp, the cat-bird's call,
Hid from the world, and happier than all.

How through the rustling leaves we loved to walk,
Our ample baskets bountifully stored,
As hand in hand we held our cheerful talk,
And still each nook for hidden nuts explored,
Proud to bear home an unexampled hoard.

JULIA.

Oft through the bending orchard have I prest,
Among the fruits in rich abundance there,
To cull for him the ripest and the best,
The evening pastime early to prepare,
Undreaming then that love is linked with care !

When in the barn the laborers and he
Threshed out the treasures of the ripened sheaf,
How sweet the music of his flail to me !
But all is over,—save my helpless grief,
And life to me is now an autumn leaf !

Oh stranger, there be fairer maids than I
Would proudly welcome such a proffered hand ;
Your lordly wealth a paradise may buy,
But vain for me the glittering, or grand ;
My sootheless heart is in another land.

Said then the traveller, I knew full well
Your wandering Youth in Oriental climes ;
Oft have I heard him of sweet Chester tell,
Repeat its tales, rehearse its rustic rhymes ;
And talk of all its pleasant autumn times.

JULIA,

The ardent skies where he has sojourned long,
Have tinged his visage with the Indian hue ;
His youthful limbs have stalwart grown and strong ;
And scarce his voice might now be known to you ;
Yet beats his heart unalterably true !

How cruel was the storm that wrecked his bark,
And drove him helmless o'er the raging wave ;
Above, below, and all around him dark,
No voice to soothe him, and no hand to save,
No hope, no refuge but a billowy grave.

And when the rescue came, and bore him far
Through widening seas to India's distant shore,
How sank in gloom his bosom's love-lit star,
How seemed the visions of his home all o'er,
Without a promise he should see it more.

But still he lives !—and in his dreams of bliss
His faithful Julia all his ardor claims ;—
Oft has he longed for such an hour as this,
Oft in his prayer his cherished one he names ;—
Dear angel !—I am he,—your long lost James !

JULIA.

As sudden sunshine gilds a murky sky,
Or moonbeams tip the raven wings of night,
That happy word illumined Julia's eye,
Made all the clouds of her dark sorrow bright,
And filled the cottage with a new delight.

The glowing hearth grew warmer than before,
The baking apples tumbled to and fro,
The singing kettle instant spouted o'er, '
Kate could no longer spin, nor Sally sew,
And e'en the wind seemed gladly to blow !

Joined all the household in a loving din ;
Fantastic shadows danced upon the wall,
Such clasping, kissing, gliding out and in !
Such leaping, laughing, talking, one and all,
It might be deemed a romping rustic Ball !

Still rural Chester spreads in hill and plain,
Still murmurs rippling Bronx its autumn lay,
Still stands a ruin in that winding lane
Skirting the border of a little bay,
But all the dwellers there have passed away !







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